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TURN DOWN JOHN A. GRAHAM

To the Democratic People of Manatee County, Greeting:

Once more I ask your kind attention while I present to you what I deem to be a matter of the utmost importance to you, both as citizens and as Democrats. For the last time before you will exercise your constitutional right to select, by your ballots, those persons into whose hands you will commit your inherent power to rule, I desire to remind you of the character of one who asks that you give him your suffrages on election day, next Tuesday. The one to whom I refer is John A. Graham, nominated by you in the primaries as your candidate for election to the office of Representative from Manatee County in the next Legislature. I would not presume to address myself to you at this time if I were not convinced that you nominated this man for this office without knowing his true character. It is with the hope that you will cure, now that you still have the opportunity to do so, this mistake innocently made by you, that I venture to again address myself to you on this matter.

It is not my purpose to rehash any of the charges I have made against this man Graham, nor to bring any new ones. I believe that I have covered the ground so well in my presentation of his true character that it is no longer either necessary or desirable to mention any of his various acts of treachery, fraud, dishonesty and deceit. In the pamphlet which I addressed to each and every registered voter of Manatee County I presented an affidavit from a reputable citizen which proved this man guilty of forgery, and if the proof therein submitted is not sufficient to satisfy any fair-minded man of Graham's unworthiness it is vain to hope to bring conviction to your minds by a repetition of former charges or a presentation of new ones. I believe there is but one consideration that will induce honest people to cast their ballots in the general election for the Democratic nominee even if he is unworthy of trust, and it is to this consideration that I will now, with apologies for this trespass on your time, address myself.

The consideration referred to is that Democrats are loth to withhold their support at the general election from the nominee of the party, fearing that this might bring upon them the charge of disloyalty to the party and put the party in jeopardy that the defeat of any of its candidates might bring to it. I venture to call to your attention the principle that underlies the organization of parties and the foundation upon which the Democratic party was built. Parties are formed by men who are actuated by an earnest, God-fearing desire to establish a form of government that will best conserve the happiness and best preserve the welfare of the people who live in a community, a State or a nation. This is the principle that underlies the formation of all political parties. In order that the people might have as much freedom as is consistent with the rights of others, in order that truth, equity and justice may come to all without distinction as to wealth, position or superior advantages possessed by some, in order that the people might be governed with the consent of the governed, and in order that the people themselves might exercise their choice and make a government administered by the people and for the people—these were the principles forming the foundations of the Democratic party. If these principles are to be maintained it is necessary that the servants in whose hands the people place their power to rule should serve them faithfully. The very first essential in the making up of a faithful servant is honesty. There are other things necessary, such as unselfishness, patriotism, intelligence, capacity and devotion to duty, energy and zeal, but all of these, important as they are, are secondary to the principle of honesty. The Democratic party cannot live unless it selects honest men to administer the government which it was formed to protect, maintain and prosper. A bad man into whose hands the Democrats have placed power, an unworthy public servant elevated by the Democrats, will do more to bring disruption to the Democratic party than the temporary triumph of an honest man of another party. It is the duty of Democrats to make searching inquiry as to the character of those who offer themselves as its servants before committing power to them. They should lose no time in learning, as soon as possible, all about the men who come forward as party candidates, but if the information as to the unworthy character, with proof making good the

information, comes to Democrats after they have committed themselves to a man in their ignorance of his unworthiness, they should none the less correct the error even if it is too late to give them the opportunity to choose another in place of the unworthy one. If the success of the party at the polls is placed ahead of the upholding of virtue and the repudiation of vice, the Democratic party does not deserve success. In your case you committed yourselves to the support of a man at the general election selected by yourselves when you were not in possession of proof of his unworthiness. This information has been furnished you and of such a character that no one can honestly and sincerely doubt it. Do not, I earnestly ask you, commit the Democratic party to the side of treachery, deceit and dishonesty by a mistaken idea of devotion to all hazards to the nominee of the party. If your party conscience will not permit you to cast your ballot for a man who is opposing the party nominee, even though he is an honest man, reject the dishonest Democrat by passing his name on the ballot. Refuse, if you will, to vote for the honest Socialist, but refuse also to vote for the dishonest Democrat. This, as you are well aware, will result in the election of the man who opposes the Democratic candidate, but far better this result, far less dangerous to the Democratic party will it be than the election of John A. Graham, proven to be a rascal.

I have said that I would not refer to the charges I have made against Graham. With your kind permission I will take back that word and refer to them briefly. I do this because of the statements I have heard he has made in his speeches. In answer to my charge that he forged the name of made in his speeches. He says that Judge Owen vindicated him from the charge of forgery. Judge Owen told me two weeks ago that Graham did forge his name. Graham says that my uncle, Dr. J. C. L'Engle, and his son Jack indorse him. Dr. L'Engle and his son Jack will not dare do this on the witness stand under oath.

I am informed that Graham in his speeches in your county is trying to influence you through your fears that the success of the Socialist nominee would establish Socialism in your county. This fear should not induce you to vote for such a man even though it was well founded. But it is a phantom held up before you to scare you. There is no danger that the Democratic party will suffer by rejecting a dishonest Democrat. Socialism cannot thrive in a community in which men will assert their power to think for themselves. Democracy is safe and will live and prosper in a community composed of men who exercise their freedom, their patriotism, their love of country, by the rejection of an unworthy man offering himself as their servant, Democrat though he call himself.

One more word and I am done. Do not regard this as my personal affair. Do not think that I am making an attack on Graham because I have cause to either hate or fear him. I have nothing to gain and nothing to lose by Graham's defeat or Graham's election. It is beyond his power to affect me for good or for evil in whatever position he may be placed. I do not hate Graham any more than I hate any other dishonest man. I oppose his election solely because I know him to be unworthy and because the choosing of him by the people of Florida as a public servant would bring disgrace to the State. If there were ten persons of similar character to Graham running for office in this State I should oppose all ten of them. As long as I am conducting a public journal I will oppose the election of any dishonest man to office. I do not wish to be regarded as meddling in the affairs of Manatee County. Graham is running for a State office and this gives me the right to criticize him, but even if he were running for a local office, having the knowledge that I have I would still deem it my duty to give it to the people interested and to urge them to reject him.

I will end with a word of hope and encouragement. Letters that I have received during the past month, and there have been many letters received by me, lead me to believe that Graham will be defeated. Democrats from every precinct have written me that they will not vote for him. Let all Democrats resolve to carry out this patriotic purpose and rascals like Graham will receive such a setback that none of their tribe will dare to aspire to represent the people again.—Claude L'Engle.